United Nations S/PV.8248

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8248th meeting

Tuesday, 8 May 2018, 10.10 a.m.

New York

President:	Ms. Wronecka	(Poland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Ms. Córdova Soria
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Djédjé
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Melki
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alfassam
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Vaverka
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 2 May 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/416)

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18-13835 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 2 May 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/416)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Her Excellency Ms. Joanne Adamson, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/416, which contains the text of a letter dated 2 May 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the fifty-third report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I now give the floor to Mr. Inzko.

Mr. Inzko: Let me begin by thanking the Council and its members for their continued attention to developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As I outlined in my report to the Secretary General (S/2018/416, annex), despite some positive steps taken by the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards Euro-Atlantic integration, which I wholeheartedly welcome and support, the pace of real reform remains slow and our common goal of irreversible stability for the country has not yet been fully achieved.

During the reporting period, Bosnia and Herzegovina took an important step towards becoming a candidate country of the European Union when the authorities handed over 20,000 pages of responses to the European Commission's questionnaire in February during President Juncker and Commissioner Hahn's visit to Sarajevo. The country also managed to adopt several strategies and a package of excise tax changes, which unlocked funding from the International Monetary Fund, especially for road construction. Those important developments demonstrate that, when political leaders have a common goal, they make the necessary compromises and find a solution. Unfortunately, such achievements have been few, as many of the most prominent elected officials remain disproportionately focused on nationalistic and divisive issues. At the same time, the authorities and relevant entities at the State level are repeatedly challenged and undermined in a way that runs contrary to the logic of integration within European structures.

As I have reported in the past, irresponsible and inflammatory rhetoric challenging fundamental aspects of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina is not new. We have witnessed the worrisome escalation of such statements in the past six months. As I made clear in my report to the Secretary-General, I am deeply concerned about the more recent readiness among some politicians to refer to the possibility of a renewed conflict, including controversial statements by senior Bosniak politicians suggesting that a rearming effort is under way to respond in preparation for a hypothetical war scenario. Those comments followed controversy earlier in the reporting period about the large-scale purchase of long-barrel, military type weapons by Republika Srpska police and media exposure of nationalist extremist groups. Accordingly, there is a general trend of armament under way, and that is a reason for deep concern. I will report on that issue in November.

Inflammatory rhetoric has also continued to be used by some senior officials from Republika Srpska denying the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina and advocating for eventual secession. Public comments were also made glorifying convicted war criminals and calling for the return of a Republika Srpska army. Certain Croat officials have mused over the territorial reorganization of the country and threatened the dissolution of the State if the current electoral issues are not resolved to their satisfaction. All public figures must choose their words carefully and responsibly. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a single and multi-ethnic sovereign State consisting of two entities, in which

all citizens — the three constituent peoples and others — live and work together, and, above all, elected officials have a responsibility to contribute to peace and reconciliation. It is within such a general political climate that Bosnia and Herzegovina is entering another election cycle, with the Central Electoral Commission expected today to announce the next poll for October 2018.

Six months ago, I briefed the Council (see S/PV.8089) on the risk of a deeper political crisis that could follow October 2018 elections should the parties fail to agree before then on the rules regulating the indirect election of delegates to one of the Houses of Parliament — the House of Peoples. Following a decision by the Constitutional Court in 2017 deleting provisions of the election law regarding that issue, the State-level Parliament needs to adopt amendments to the law. Otherwise, the process of forming authorities after elections could prove extremely difficult, or even impossible. The European Union and the United States are currently working to facilitate an agreement between the main political parties concerning that issue, and my Office supports them in that effort. But the ultimate responsibility lies with political leaders. A range of possible solutions exists, which could accommodate a compromise, if the main parties are willing to step back from maximalist demands and negotiate in good faith, but time is short. As I speak, the Central Election Commission has announced the holding of general elections on 7 October 2018, although there is no solution to the issue of the House of Peoples has been found in terms of the election law.

Another area of concern in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the deterioration in the rule of law. Prominent elected officials continue to ignore and reject the final and binding decisions of State-level courts, and corruption is prevalent in the political system. Those two elements converged in a recent case concerning the State-level judiciary. In July 2017, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court declared unconstitutional several provisions of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Criminal Procedure Code. As the deadline of six months has passed without the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliament correcting the issue, the Court could soon rule on non-enforcement, thereby leaving the Bosnia and Herzegovina judiciary without the tools necessary to combat organized crime and corruption. It is unfortunate that some political parties object to the adoption of amendments in line with international standards. It is also very telling that the parties that oppose the latter are the same ones challenging the State-level institutions in the current arrangement of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I also need to highlight once again the fact that the citizens of Mostar continue to be deprived of the basic democratic right to elect their local representatives — which they have been unable to do for nearly a decade — owing to the failure of the parties in the Parliament to implement a decision of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court related to the Mostar electoral system. I am, however, encouraged by the fact that representatives of several political parties in Mostar have begun meetings at their own initiative in Mostar, in what appears to be a sincere attempt to finally resolve that issue after 10 years. I urge the parties to reach a compromise that would enable the citizens of Mostar to enjoy the same democratic right to elect their local leaders, which the citizens in the rest of the country enjoy.

Additionally, I recall another long-standing pending Constitutional Court decision and a related decision of the High Representative, which concern the constitutional equality of Serbs within the Federation and which still need to be reflected in three of the cantonal Constitutions after more than 15 years. That means that Serbs are not equal and do not enjoy the same rights in those three cantons. They are not even mentioned in the three cantons' Constitutions, which is really outrageous after 15 years. In that regard, there is also a Constitutional Court decision that has not been respected.

In conclusion, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina requires the continued attention and unified effort of the international community. Bosnia and Herzegovina has made enormous strides since the end of hostilities in 1995 in building its institutions and the establishment of security and normalcy. But we must not take that progress for granted. Although the leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina remain committed to integration with the European Union, that has not yet had an effect on the day-to-day political climate, in which some political figures are all too ready to use irresponsible rhetoric and seem predominantly concerned with maintaining their positions. The risk is that that divisiveness and a sense of unease about the future of the country will slowly seep into the fabric of society. As we all know, many people have left over the past five years, including more than 100,000 young

people, because of that insecurity. We should not forget the risks of nationalism and extremism on all sides, combined with a growing sense of socioeconomic stagnation in the country. It is for that reason that I believe that the international community needs to urgently increase its efforts aimed at promoting reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the region. The United Nations, along with others, is well placed to play a prominent role in such efforts.

Beyond that, there needs to be a change in the way in which politics are conducted within the country. That change needs to come from the politicians themselves, but, as an international community — individually and collectively — we have an interest in encouraging that change. To begin with, in the current environment, we need to maintain all of the tools at our disposal to prevent any further deterioration of the situation. I am thinking here about the civilian and military executive mandates. I also believe that we should be ready to be more prescriptive about the reforms that are needed to take the country forward, and more ready to respond against words and actions by leading political figures when they risk further destabilizing the political and security environment. Lastly, I appeal to everyone as part of the international community to be united in our approach and coordinated in our efforts. After all, we share the same goal: a sovereign, united and decentralized — but also stable and functional — Bosnia and Herzegovina. I believe that we all want to see Bosnia and Herzegovina as a shining example of tolerance and trust where the traditional common life of all cultures, nations and citizens is possible.

The President: I thank Mr. Inzko for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Melki (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his enlightening briefing and precise commentary on the latest developments.

More than 20 years after a murderous conflict and the Dayton Peace Agreement, signed in Paris, Bosnia and Herzegovina is at a turning point in its history. Indeed, we are awaiting the announcement of parliamentary elections for October. The elected authorities will have the task of paving the way towards European integration in the years to come. I would like to underscore three points that merit our special attention before that crucial election deadline.

First, unity in the country is most essential. The comments by political leaders on the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the glorification of war criminals and anything that contributes to a resurgence of violence are irresponsible behaviours. We urge all political actors to refrain from stoking hatred and stirring up the ghosts of the past. Priority must be given to strengthening the country's central institutions as a prerequisite for building up the rule of law. We therefore call for respect for the decisions of the institutions mentioned in the General Framework Agreement for Peace, in particular the Constitutional Court. Res judicata decisions must be implemented as soon as possible in a spirit of compromise, including on electoral matters.

Secondly, I would like to address reforms. Given that resolution 2384 (2017) was adopted in November 2017, France calls on the political parties to agree on a reform of the electoral law, which is a necessary precursor to the implementation of the election results. Bosnia and Herzegovina's political stability is at stake. In addition to electoral reform, we regret the slowdown of reforms during 2017. The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina are calling more than ever for the implementation of social and economic reforms that will contribute to the country's development and regional integration. Judicial reforms are also expected, at a time when Europe is attaching the utmost importance to fighting corruption and organized crime. The enlargement package published by the European Commission on 17 April focuses precisely on the reforms that are needed in the socioeconomic and rule-of-law areas.

Thirdly, despite a fragile situation and the numerous challenges, Bosnia and Herzegovina has a horizon towards which to move: European integration. France associates itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union. We are pleased to see that Bosnia and Herzegovina is unanimous on European integration. It is not only the institutions — from the Presidency to the cantons and entities — that are calling for an integration process into the European Union, but, above all, the women and men of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They are the ones who want to join the Europe of the peoples that we are building, day after day. The European Union will continue to support the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that respect, the European Union military Operation Althea will continue its work by adapting, as closely as possible,

to the developments in the security situation on the ground in order to enable the Bosnian security forces to act autonomously.

I mentioned at the outset that we are at a turning point in the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such a moment requires political courage — the courage to face situations that some say are unsolvable and challenges that are perceived as insurmountable. As at every turning point in its history, Bosnia and Herzegovina can count on the support of France.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first open meeting of the Security Council under the presidency of Poland, I am pleased to reaffirm the full support of my delegation and wish you, Madam President, every success in your endeavours. We would also like to thank you, Madam, for your kind words on the Peruvian presidency. We appreciate the convening of this debate, as well as the important briefing delivered by High Representative Valentin Inzko.

Peru recognizes the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the validity of the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace. It is an agreement that, with the support of the international community, lays the foundation for stability and the maintenance of peace in the country, and has important implications for the region. We note with concern the limited progress on the implementation of the 5+2 agenda required to close the Office of the High Representative and consolidate the State in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In view of that, and given the forthcoming general elections scheduled for October, we would like to highlight the need to make progress on two lines of action that we believe are essential to build sustainable peace.

First, I will speak on the rule of law and institution-building. We appreciate the efforts to comply with the decisions of the Constitutional Court to amend the regulatory framework of the various levels of Government. However, we are concerned about the lack of action on the legislative developments required to reform the electoral law and the Code of Criminal Procedure. We believe that those are necessary to ensure inclusive elections and effectively fight corruption and organized crime. There are also concerns about violations of the law on the temporary prohibition of the disposal of State property and the continued existence of provisions on the celebration of the Day of the Republic of Serbia. We believe that the decisions of the Constitutional Court must be fully implemented.

Secondly, I will address political dialogue, moderation and agreement. We believe that sustaining peace requires building a common vision of the future by and for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ethnic, cultural and religious diversity must be understood as values of their society. Peru encourages greater engagement of women and youth in the national political process, including in the upcoming general elections. We consider it urgent to overcome the paralysis of the Parliamentary Assembly, which has been impeding the necessary reforms to guarantee the smooth running of the State.

We are particularly concerned about belligerent rhetoric, which is exacerbated by the election campaign, questioning of the State authority, secessionist threats and increased arms purchases by law enforcement. Such actions increase the feeling of instability. Political leaders have the primary responsibility of building sustainable peace. That involves rejecting hate speech and the glorification of war criminals and, to the contrary, setting an example of moderation and commitment to the complex and delicate process of reconciliation.

In conclusion, we would like to underline the importance of full cooperation between the parties and the High Representative and the European Union Operation Althea, to whom we would like to reiterate Peru's full support in the implementation of their respective mandates.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We congratulate the Republic of Poland most warmly for assuming the presidency of the Security Council and cordially wish you, Madam President, great success in all your endeavours, especially during your stewardship of this main organ dedicated to ensuring global peace and security. We also commend you, Ambassador Joanna Wronecka and your team for choosing very timely and critical issues for consideration on this month's agenda. We look forward to the deliberations resulting in greater awareness and action.

We thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his briefing and update on the recent developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We also welcome the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Miloš Vukašinović, to the Chamber. Kazakhstan reiterates its commitment to the territorial

integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country. We have witnessed substantial progress in the country in different fields; however, there are a number of issues that remain unresolved.

The country is preparing for it general elections in October. As such, the efforts of all parties must be focused on the earliest possible adoption of the election law. We call on the leaders of the two entities to implement the Peace Agreement and observe all provisions and procedures that are integral components of that settlement, including the rulings of the Constitutional Court.

We very much welcome the meeting held in March between the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Presidents of Serbia and Croatia. The political will of the leaders of neighbouring countries is the most effective instrument available to promote dialogue and trust among the parties. My delegation welcomes the positive ongoing dialogue among the Governments, including regular high-level contacts, and we sincerely encourage the parties to carry them forward.

Unfortunately, there has been in an increase in political tensions inside the country, accompanied by provocative and aggressive rhetoric by certain representatives of the parties. That type of communication obviously affects negatively the political climate before the elections, overall stability and security, as well as the social and economic dimensions that impact the quality of life of the local population. In that regard, we encourage all political actors, as well as the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to resolve all disputes. We believe that should be done through the established legal processes, constructive dialogue and within the existing constitutional framework. We urge all the parties to act in accordance with the Peace Agreement, and also to abide by their commitment to cooperate fully with all the institutions involved in the implementation of this peace settlement.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to call on all parties to resolve pending issues, which present a challenge to respect for human rights and for democratic institutions, inter alia by ensuring further implementation of the adopted reforms with a sharp focus on good governance and the rule of law. That must also include combating corruption and organized crime and preventing terrorism and violent extremism. At the same time, we need to address any outstanding shortcomings of the judiciary required for its de-politicization, impartiality and independence, including the prosecution of war crimes.

On other tracks, efforts must also be focused on greater fiscal responsibility and sustainability, strengthening the Parliamentary Assembly and developing media and broadcasting communication. The question of returning refugees and displaced persons, together with the issues related to their resettlement, should be addressed as well. We also would like to underline that the engagement of civil society organizations and the participation of women and youth are critical for building intercommunal trust and confidence.

Finally, we encourage the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to overcome narrow political interests and to make meaningful progress towards implementing commitments on economic and governance reforms.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): I congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency for this month.

I would like to thank the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Inzko, for his very frank update on the developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We greatly appreciate the work of the Office of the High Representative to help the country to achieve greater peace and prosperity and to strengthen security and stability in the region.

The United States affirms its strong support for the mandate of the High Representative as the final authority under the Dayton Peace Accords on the civilian implementation of the agreement. We thank him for his dedicated service and express our firm commitment to uphold the Dayton Accords, maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and promoting continued Euro-Atlantic integration.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's commitment to Euro-Atlantic values remains critical. Both NATO and the European Union (EU) have indicated that their doors remain open if Bosnia and Herzegovina fulfils its responsibilities under the Dayton Peace Accords, and if the country is willing to do the hard work to meet its standards for membership. The United States urges further progress towards integration with both NATO and the EU, which will require stronger political resolve and dedication.

We commend the continued work of the EU-led Operation Althea and of NATO to promote security and capacity-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We recognize the authorities' handover of answers to the European Commission questionnaire in February and view it as an important step towards the country's integration with Europe. Nonetheless, the United States is concerned about the recent uptick in divisive, nationalist rhetoric in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That threatens to exacerbate divisions and conflict, the exact opposite of what the Dayton Peace Accords and subsequent reform efforts set out to achieve. We urge all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to embrace key political, socioeconomic and electoral reforms and work to enhance the rule of law, tackle corruption and improve the overall political climate in the country for the benefit of all its citizens.

Looking ahead to the general elections in October, we urge Bosnia and Herzegovina to adopt and implement electoral reforms, especially those addressing the so-called Ljubić ruling. Those reforms are vital to the holding of free, fair and transparent elections, and to maintaining the stability that the country has worked so hard to achieve. Without those reforms it may be much more difficult to form a Government after the elections, which will complicate efforts to build a secure stable and prosperous future for the country. We share many of the concerns voiced by the High Representative in his report on Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2017/922, annex), including those actions that could weaken the rule of law, such as destabilizing rhetoric from political leaders that allude to a break-up of the State and hypothetical comments about future war. The Council must remain alert to actions and rhetoric that seek to undermine and threaten the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its two entities and three constituent peoples.

The United States looks forward to a time when Bosnia and Herzegovina's status satisfies the objectives and conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, as established by the Peace Implementation Council. When that day comes, we will be able to say with confidence that Bosnia and Herzegovina has fully implemented its responsibilities under the Dayton Peace Accords and is irreversibly on course for European integration. Until then, we encourage the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the international community, to support the reforms needed to reach that milestone and to maintain their commitment to the Office of the High Representative as it works to ensure the success of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ms. Gwadey (Ethiopia): I would like to begin by thanking the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his comprehensive briefing on the latest report concerning the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2018/416, annex). We would like to affirm our support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We would like to welcome the positive developments demonstrated by Bosnia and Herzegovina in the reporting period, including the progress on the country's European Union (EU) accession process. We believe that progress is testament to the country's commitment to the EU integration process, with a far-reaching, long-term and positive contribution to the stability and prosperity of the country and the region at large. We are also encouraged by the continued exchange of visits by high-level officials and political leaders of the countries in the region, which, in our view, would strengthen good neighbourly relations and enhance cooperation in the Western Balkans. In that regard, the trilateral meeting undertaken by the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Presidents of Serbia and Croatia is commendable. We encourage the continuation of such high-level engagement in future.

We are nevertheless concerned about some of the reported developments that undermine the political stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In particular, we take note of the divisive rhetoric and actions that continue to challenge the constitutional order and integrity of the State-level judiciary system in the country. In that regard, we call upon all authorities and political leaders to fully respect the decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Respecting the rule of law and the authority of State institutions, which are established under the Dayton Peace Accords, is fundamental for the State-building process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is therefore important that all parties refrain from any provocative statements or actions that could undermine the sovereignty, territorial integrity, cohesion and constitutional order of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We also take note of the continued disagreement concerning changes to the electoral law in Bosnia and

Herzegovina. We believe that this issue must be handled very wisely, as it has the potential to affect not only the formation of Government after the next election cycle but also the continuity and stability of the country. It is our hope that the ruling of the Constitutional Court on reviewing the country's election law will be implemented in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement. We also encourage parties to undertake serious political dialogue to address the differences surrounding the issue of electoral reform, which would be particularly relevant considering that a general election will be held this year.

In conclusion, we would like to express our support to the High Representative and his Office in discharging their mandate to monitor the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Dayton Agreement. We call on the parties to extend the cooperation that is vital to the work of the High Representative. We also recognize the essential role played by the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUFOR Althea, in maintaining safety and stability in the country.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): Madam, we wish you the best of luck during your presidency, and you can count on our full support in your work this month. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Peru for its excellent stewardship of the Council in April, both here in New York and during the Council's visits abroad in April.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union later today.

Like others before me, I thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his briefing and his work.

Today I will focus on three issues: first, the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, secondly, the rule of law and thirdly, the country's future prospects.

With regard to my first point, about the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, since the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina have worked hard to create a peaceful and prosperous country and have done so with the strong support of the international community. While progress has been made, we share the High Representative's concerns about the current political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The divisive speech and actions of political leaders are negatively affecting the country's governance, cohesiveness and reforms. In the present circumstances, we believe that the High Representative and his Office remain essential.

That brings me to my second point, one that our Peruvian colleague also highlighted just now, which is that we are concerned about attempts to undermine the rule of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Attempts to delay necessary amendments to the criminal procedure code and the law establishing the Intelligence and Security Agency are hindering the fight against corruption and the sharing of intelligence, including with international partners. We call on the Council of Ministers and Parliament to pass the required amendments without delay.

My third and final point relates to the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We support its Euro-Atlantic integration as a means to ensure the future prosperity and security of its people and the region. It is crucial that Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leaders step up their implementation of the reforms needed to make progress towards that integration. Ensuring that electoral reforms are in place should be the first step. A constitutional crisis in October must be avoided.

In conclusion, in January the Secretary-General urged European leaders to show that the continent can live up to its ideals of shared prosperity and peaceful coexistence. The general elections in October in Bosnia and Herzegovina create an opportunity for its political leaders to show their commitment to those ideals. We strongly encourage them to grasp that opportunity and put future before past, reform before stagnation and unity before divisiveness.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to congratulate you, Madam, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council, and to wish you success in your duties.

We have carefully studied the report of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2018/416), which was once again issued belatedly and just before the start of today's meeting. We would once again like to point out the importance of complying with the time frame for submitting it to the Council. We are compelled to note that like its predecessors, the text has a certain anti-Serbian tone, suffers from biased and politicized conclusions and does not provide an objective picture of the situation in the country.

Republika Srpska is once again being blamed for literally all of the current difficulties afflicting the

process of achieving the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, which is particularly surprising, for the major political crisis that has overtaken the Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As before, the selection of evidence in support of the report's assertions is unbalanced and frequently based on unverified information. As a result, the real situation in the country is distorted and false impressions are created. That applies particularly to the celebration on 9 January of Republika Srpska Day, which took place in accordance with a law enacted in October 2016 that the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not object to at the time. The report's concerns about the modernization of automatic weapons that the Republika Srpska police are equipped with are also difficult to understand. The process is being conducted in full compliance with the laws of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has been acknowledged, incidentally, by the European-led force responsible for security in the country. For some reason, the report does not mention the fact that similar replacement programmes for outdated police weapons are also being carried out in the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation.

We were baffled by the so-called concern expressed in the new report about the March pilgrimage tour to Orthodox and historic sites in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Night Wolves multinational motorcycle club, which is dragged in inappropriate references to unilateral United States sanctions and Ukrainian issues. The Night Wolves always coordinate their events with law-enforcement bodies and have been conducting regular tours of European countries, with purely humanitarian intentions, for several years now. The primary aim is to pay tribute to the memory of our great forebears who defeated fascism during the Second World War. By the way, Victory Day is celebrated in Europe today and tomorrow in Russia and the countries of the former Soviet Union.

We call on the High Representative to focus his efforts on implementing the 5+2 plan, which should have remained his top priority. Regrettably, in practice he has focused on other issues that have nothing to do with his mandate. It is strange to hear his say publicly that there should be less Dayton and more Brussels in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is an overly free interpretation of his mandate, to put it mildly. The result is that we have an obvious impasse in implementing the 5+2 plan.

In that regard, we support the principle of transferring all responsibility for the current processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the local authorities and further reducing the budget and personnel of the Office of the High Representative with the aim of closing it in accordance with the existing conditions and criteria. We see no reason for any executive role for the Office. The time for this special instrument is over.

In the Bosnian leadership's view, the current internal situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is experiencing the worst systemic political crisis of the post-Dayton period both at the State level and in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, reaching a point of paralysis in the normal functioning of Government bodies. At its heart is a rupture in relations of trust and cooperation among the three constituent peoples of the Federation whose depth is worse than at any time since the end of the period of armed conflict. There are serious fears for the inviolability of one of the key, foundational premises of the Dayton Agreement — equality. That is a major concern, since we believe that Bosnia and Herzegovina has no viable alternative to the Dayton framework.

The Dayton algorithm is also fully applicable to the most serious practical problem, which is reform of the Federation's election laws. The key event in Bosnia and Herzegovina this year is the upcoming general elections in October. That expression of the people's will should be fair, free and independent, including free from foreign interference, and should reflect the interests of all the country's peoples.

The role of the international community in internal Bosnian affairs needs particular attention. The main function of foreign participation should be to encourage the processes of genuine national reconciliation and the strengthening of mutual understanding and cooperation among all the peoples living in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the past few months, unfortunately, we have seen our partners take a number of steps aimed at interfering directly in the work of the Bosnian authorities, of which the most revealing is the pressure that has been put on the Bosnia and Herzegovina High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council to change decisions that do not meet certain external expectations. Regrettably, with regard to reform of the election laws, the international mediators also deliberately favour one side, which cannot contribute to establishing the necessary climate of trust.

The activity of the semi-clandestine so-called Bern process in Sarajevo initiated by a group of States last year is not part of any coordinated efforts. As far as we know, the agenda of that closed diplomatic club includes issues related to broad constitutional reform of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which come under the Dayton Agreement. By the way, representatives from the Office of the High Representative took part in the work on that so-called process, but we were not officially informed. There is no information about it in the report. It is hardly likely that this kind of factionalism in the international community can benefit the common goals of strengthening peace, stability and security in the country and the region. We must be united if we truly want that for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the context of procedural issues, apart from the importance of submitting the report on time, we would also like to draw attention to the extract it contains from the final communiqué of the December meeting of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board in Sarajevo, which was not adopted by consensus. In future, we would request that in such cases it be compulsory for the reports to include the relevant references to the particular positions of the States members of the Steering Board. We would also like to propose to Council members and anyone else who wants to that they study the alternative report on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina prepared by Republika Srpska. It contains useful information on a number of issues, including the outside funding for a number of media outlets in Bosnia and Herzegovina that position themselves as so-called independent sources.

Russia intends to continue to consistently contribute to the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, which still has significant positive potential, and to strengthen its constructive bilateral cooperation with the country. Bosnia and Herzegovina has every chance of becoming a place for successful political, economic and cultural cooperation for the broadest possible range of participants. We hope that those chances can become a reality through our joint efforts.

Mr. Djedje (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on Poland's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May, and to assure you of Côte d'Ivoire's support, as we had already begun to do yesterday during our important discussion on children and armed conflict. In any case, we wish you every success for the month of May. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the quality of his briefing on the situation in that country.

In speaking for the first time on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I would like to inform the High Representative that he has the full support of Côte d'Ivoire for his mandate in implementing the Dayton Peace Agreement of 14 December 1995. That Agreement has been the cornerstone of the work of the international community in providing the country with a multiethnic, multi-faith and multicultural framework.

Like the High Representative, my country is pleased to note that Bosnia and Herzegovina has submitted to the European Commission the answers to the questionnaire necessary for the review of its candidacy for membership in the European Union. That act demonstrates, if it were needed, the Bosnian authorities' ability to make the necessary efforts and essential reforms, particularly in the areas of the rule of law, fundamental rights and judicial independence, in order to complete the cycle of political and socioeconomic change in their country. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the fact that the Bosnian authorities have adopted the necessary legislative measures to resume cooperation with the International Monetary Fund.

Despite the hopes raised by the points that I have just highlighted, Côte d'Ivoire remains concerned about the ongoing political tensions in the country, which, if we are not careful, could undermine the gains of the Dayton Agreement. My delegation is particularly concerned about the statements of the leaders of Republika Srpska calling for secession from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire calls on all political actors in the country to focus on development priorities, particularly economic and social, and to refrain from being drawn into the rhetoric of division, which could threaten the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We also urge all stakeholders to redouble their efforts and to undertake the fundamental reforms to ensure that the elections to be held in October are fully democratic.

My delegation remains deeply concerned that the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina has not dealt with the shortcomings of several provisions of the criminal procedure code to combat organized crime and corruption. In that regard, we encourage the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina to undertake the appropriate

reforms with a view to tackling the economic, social and security challenges facing the country today. My country also urges the political authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to guarantee for their citizens the establishment of the rule of law in order to prevent situations of impunity in a country in search of national reconciliation and in which all communities are called on to live together in peace and harmony.

We encourage the international community to remain alert with respect to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which remains fragile. The Security Council must be aware at all times of any difficulties that the High Representative may face in the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Accord, which is key not just to Bosnia and Herzegovina's stability but to that of the Balkan region as a whole. We call on all Bosnian political groups to reject dangerous rhetoric and to use dialogue in order to find peaceful solutions to the differences between the country's different communities. We also encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina's neighbours to combine their efforts to promote lasting peace there.

Finally, like other countries, Côte d'Ivoire would like to express its commitment to the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a fully functional and independent State.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): As active members of the Group of Friends for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, we are very pleased to see you presiding over the Security Council for the month of May, Madam President, and to congratulate you on convening this important meeting. I would also like to salute Ambassador Meza-Cuadra for a very active and successful presidency during the month of April. We thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his report on the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2018/416, annex).

Since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina has made significant progress towards peacebuilding and achieving an equitable economy and sustainable development for all its citizens. Indeed, according to Mr. Inzko's report, significant progress has been made over the past six months with respect to the country's plans to join the European Union and NATO. A foreign policy strategy has also been agreed for the next five years, as has a strategy for developing and implementating plans to strengthen the country's economy, reform its institutions and reduce unemployment. In particular, we would like to highlight the trilateral meeting in March between the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency and its counterparts from its neighbours Croatia and Serbia, which we understand will be repeated in the near future. All these developments are signs that there is a common vision for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Equatorial Guinea hopes that this important vision and progress can be maintained and strengthened so that it can help to foster lasting national unity, which will cement Bosnia and Herzegovina's role in the Balkans, Europe and the world. That is why we would like to express our deep concern about the continuing divisive and inflammatory rhetoric of political leaders from all political groups, and on many occasions for ethnic reasons. Such behaviour puts all the aforementioned achievements in jeopardy and hinders the implementation of the Peace Agreement, the preparations for the elections scheduled for October and the process of institutional reforms needed to facilitate peaceful elections, ensure that the results of the elections are implemented, support decision-making in State institutions to protect and strengthen the rule of law, secure lasting peace and development and continue efforts to contain and eliminate crime, corruption, violent extremism and terrorism.

I would like to express our appreciation for the commitment of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina and emphasize our support for his mandate and efforts to assist in the implementation of the Peace Agreement. We also appreciate the work of the European Union-led peacekeeping force in supporting and facilitating all of these processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the work of the High Representative and the United Nations country team.

We share the High Representative's view that elected officials have a responsibility to contribute to peace and reconciliation. October's elections will be a turning point in the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I would like to see the political and ethnic divisions between Serbs, Bosnians and Croats set aside before the election season and national interests taking precedence over any other self-interest, for the benefit of the country and the people, including refugees and displaced persons. Equatorial Guinea stands ready to work with the international community to achieve

lasting peace and security and sustainable development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on taking up the presidency of the Security Council, and we wish you every success. I also wish to thank High Representative Inzko and his team for their objective and detailed reports and their continued efforts to support the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They have the United Kingdom's full and constant support.

I would agree with my French colleague that Bosnia and Herzegovina remains at a crossroads today. In the six months since we last met (see S/PV.8089), there has been some small, incremental progress in terms of reform and in reaching at least two significant milestones. And yet the vestiges of division continue to mar that progress and to prevent Bosnia and Herzegovina from reaching the potential its citizens deserve. I will briefly touch on those two milestones.

First, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) issued its final judgments in November and transferred responsibility to the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals at the end of the year. We recognize the Tribunal's achievements, including the first instance conviction of former wartime commander Ratko Mladić of genocide and crimes against humanity. Although Mladić's conviction will not bring back the thousands who lost their lives, it demonstrates that the architects of suffering will be held to account, giving others around the world hope that there can be justice for appalling human rights abuses.

The Tribunal has accumulated a wealth of practical knowledge and experience over the 24 years it has been operating, and it is important that the lessons learned are shared with other international criminal courts and tribunals. It has done ground-breaking work to investigate, prosecute and convict perpetrators of wartime sexual violence. I would like to echo the report of the Counter-Terrorism Committee in welcoming Bosnia and Herzegovina's initiatives to integrate women and peace and security in counter-terrorism and countering violent-extremism issues through the development of national and local action plans. The United Kingdom encourages Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue and intensify its efforts on this positive trajectory. It is a matter for regret that some political leaders have disputed the rulings of the Tribunal and the decisions of domestic war crimes chambers in the region and have even made inflammatory remarks about a return to conflict. I agree with my American colleague that we should condemn such rhetoric, which privileges the pursuit of political advantage ahead of the pursuit of justice for victims and a peaceful future for all.

Secondly, Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted its European Union (EU) questionnaire earlier this year. We commend that achievement, which is not insignificant given the complexities of the system being assessed. But we have been disappointed to see only limited commitment to the difficult but essential reforms that underlie the political commitment to becoming an EU member State. Now that the questionnaire has been submitted, Bosnia and Herzegovina must demonstrate its commitment to upholding the rule of law and implementing agreed reforms. Among these, as my Dutch colleague has already highlighted today, there is an urgent need to amend the provisions of the criminal procedure code on special investigative measures in order to comply with the Constitutional Court decision of June 2017 and align with international standards. Failure to do so would seriously undermine the fight against corruption and organized crime and put international cooperation and the security of partner countries in jeopardy.

As the High Representative noted, 2018 will also be a significant year for Bosnia and Herzegovina, with elections expected in October. However, amendments to the electoral law are necessary so that the results of those elections can be implemented. If political leaders fail to agree to those amendments, the entire country will be exposed to an unnecessary and serious risk. Political leaders must demonstrate their ability to compromise on a solution without further delay and move towards European standards. As elections approach, we see an opportunity for Bosnia and Herzegovina to focus on the future, not the past. Divisive nationalist rhetoric demeans those who use it and does a disservice to the people and the country as a whole. The United Kingdom encourages the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to demonstrate to their people and the European Union that they are committed to building a better and more secure future for them and their children.

The consequences of Bosnia and Herzegovina's divisive politics are easy to see. Huge numbers of young people leave every year in search of the political stability and employment opportunities that they are denied at home. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina deserve better. As a long-standing friend of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United Kingdom will continue to stand in solidarity alongside those who want a better, more prosperous and stable future for the country even as it pursues Euro-Atlantic integration.

The United Kingdom's hosting of the Western Balkans Summit of the Berlin Process in London this summer is a signal of that solidarity and commitment. We also remain committed to Operation Althea and the High Representative, including the use of Bonn powers, if the situation requires, until stability and security are firmly entrenched.

Ms. Córdova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): *We are grateful to Mr. Valentin Inzko, the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his report (S/2018/416, annex).*

We commend the positive political and economic developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the previous review period, in particular the adoption of special tax laws and the approval on 9 February of the second disbursement of funds under the Extended Fund Facility. We also welcome the trilateral meeting held in March between the Presidencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. We highlight the approval of the State budget for 2018 and the foreign policy strategy for the next five years, as well as the progress made in the fight against money-laundering and the financing of terrorism. Those efforts demonstrate the commitment of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to continuing to undertake the reforms needed to promote the country's stability and contribute to the initiatives aimed at achieving the development and stability they desire. We therefore encourage them to focus on those aspects and to intensify their efforts to implement the 5+2 agenda as a prerequisite for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

Despite the progress that has been made, challenges remain in the political environment. The elections will take place in October and we believe it is important that political leaders take consensual action on electoral changes so that the elections can be properly conducted. In that connection, we call on Council members to work together in an inclusive environment, respecting the Dayton Agreement, which continues to be the legal basis and benchmark for stability and the peaceful settlement of differences between the parties. Those challenges could ultimately destabilize the country and threaten the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We therefore urge all political leaders to put the interests of their people before their ethnic political interests.

Bolivia would like to reiterate its commitment to the full respect of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that regard, we stress that in order to preserve those elements, its Constitution and the decisions of the judiciary with regard to the rule of law must be respected. We also call on political leaders and all parties to refrain from using nationalist rhetoric that foments divisions in the country. We hope that Operation Althea and the Office of the High Representative will continue to cooperate closely and will play a constructive role in maintaining peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina within the framework of their mandate.

Lastly, we stress that we encourage the entire population of Bosnia and Herzegovina to live together in harmony, overcoming the divisions of the past and putting shared development first. In that regard, we urge the international community to address the concerns of all stakeholders with an impartial and equitable approach, in the interests of lasting stability.

Mr. Alfassam (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the delegation of Kuwait would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. We wish you every success and would also like to take this opportunity to thank the delegation of Peru for its success during its presidency for the month of April.

I would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his very useful briefing and his most recent report (S/2018/416, annex) on the implementation of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Peace Agreement. We would like to assure him of our full support for his work in implementing his mandate and his efforts to help the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina deal with their many challenges.

We welcome the positive developments that have occurred, including the implementation of various commitments such as Euro-Atlantic integration, the response to the European questionnaire and the

adoption of a fiscal law, which will be finalized as soon as the International Monetary Fund concludes its consideration of the law. All these efforts will help the country implement the necessary reforms that will enable it to join the European Union.

Two decades after its signing, the Framework Peace Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina remains the cornerstone of the country's institutional stability and a stable framework for ensuring lasting peace. We are concerned about the fact that the report cites a number of challenges related to the peace agreement during the period covered, particularly statements inciting hatred and divisive rhetoric. We urge all of the country's political leaders to prioritize the national interests of the Bosnian people and to reject narrow ethnic interests that undermine stability and unity. In that regard, we urge all political leaders to place national interests above any other consideration and to rise above narrow political and ethnic interests that would undermine the chances for progress and stability, and we call them to engage in serious political consultations to discuss reforms proposed to the electoral law and the Criminal Procedural Code in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to avoid a potential serious political crisis in the country.

These developments are taking place at the same time that we are seeing limited progress towards the implementation of the 5+2 plan, which has hindered the closure of the Office of the High Representative, in particular with regard to the registration of military assets, as mentioned in the report (S/2018/416, annex). Kuwait fully supports the Office of the High Representative, in accordance with the Dayton Peace Agreement and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, and calls on the High Representative to step up his efforts to ensure the full implementation of the 5+2 plan.

Lastly, Kuwait would like to reaffirm the importance of respecting the unity, stability and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its Constitution and all the decisions issued by the courts, which should be upheld by all the parties concerned in order to strengthen stability in the country. We call on all stakeholders to tackle the challenges they are facing and to pool their efforts to ensure the full implementation of the 5+2 plan.

Mr. Vaverka (Sweden): Let me begin by joining others in congratulating you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May. We look forward to working closely with you, Madam, and your team in the coming weeks. Let me also express my appreciation for the clear and insightful briefing presented today by the High Representative, Mr. Valentin Inzko. He can rely on Sweden's full and continued support for his important efforts in support of Bosnia and Herzegovina going forward.

Sweden aligns itself with a statement to be delivered later on behalf of the European Union (EU).

In October of last year, the Council of the European Union reiterated, once again, its unequivocal commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective. Central to that perspective is its commitment to the EU integration process and the reform agenda. Unfortunately, the pace of reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina has stalled since last year, yielding only very modest results. It is now crucial that adequate reform of the electoral law take place in order for elections to happen in October and for their results to be implemented. We regret that, so far, there seems to be no real desire to reach a compromise on that issue.

The implementation of the reform agenda must be stepped up urgently to put necessary reforms back on track, with an emphasis on the rule of law and socioeconomic development. That is essential for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as high unemployment and widespread corruption are contributing to a worrying trend of young, educated people leaving the country.

The security situation on the ground remains relatively calm and stable; nonetheless, there are worrying developments. The recurring use of separatist, divisive and nationalistic rhetoric threatens the integrity and unity of the country. We call on all parties to refrain from engaging in ethnically motivated disputes and agendas. Political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina must live up to their responsibility in that regard.

Sweden believes that a credible EU perspective, based on conditionality and progress on own merits, is one of the most powerful drivers for peace, stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans. The future of the region is closely interconnected with the future of the rest of Europe. Joint challenges require joint solutions. Therefore, we must strengthen our cooperation to meet common challenges, such as organized crime, terrorism and migration.

To move forward, the focus of our efforts should be on the future and not on the past, both within Bosnia and Herzegovina and in its relations with its neighbours. Regional cooperation and reconciliation are crucial for stability and progress in the region and beyond. We support the Regional Cooperation Council in its important work to strengthen good neighbourly relations in the Western Balkans. To build peaceful mutual understanding between the countries of the region, cultural and social differences among communities must be bridged, not least among children and youth.

It is also essential to recognize and address the scars of war for survivors. In that regard, sexual and gender-based violence committed during the war must be addressed. We welcome Bosnia and Herzegovina's national action plan on women and peace and security, which should be implemented in an inclusive manner.

We acknowledge the need for discussions on the reconfiguration of the international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We remain supportive of the idea of phasing out the international presence in due course, when the situation on the ground allows for it. However, we do not believe that the current situation is sufficiently stable for a drawing down at the present time.

Since the end of the war in 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina, supported by the international community, not least the European Union, has been on a journey to build a better future for all its people. We will continue to support those efforts as Bosnia and Herzegovina works towards realizing its European perspective and building a country of prosperity, peace, stability and equality for all.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I wish to congratulate Poland on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. China also wishes to thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing.

China respects the sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We respect the choice made by the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the future of their country. We support the peaceful coexistence of different ethnicities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their search for common development.

We welcome the efforts made by Bosnia and Herzegovina in promoting national reconciliation and economic and social development. We hope that the country's different ethnicities will be fully and actively engaged in consolidating the progress made in the political process and in society building, seek consensus through dialogue and consultation, resolve their differences by peaceful means and fully implement the Dayton Peace Accord, so as to promote greater development in all areas, which will enable the different peoples of the country to truly enjoy the peace dividend.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is an important country in the Balkans. Stable development and ethnic harmony are in the common interests of the international community and the countries of the region. The international community should take a balanced and prudent approach and pay special attention to and accommodate the views of all the parties concerned, so as to play a constructive role in helping the country achieve national reconciliation and long-term stability and development.

China welcomes the effort by High Representative Inzko to advance the country's political process. We hope that, within the purview of his mandate, he will play an active role in promoting the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. We hope that the European Union-led peacekeeping force will continue to strengthen communication and cooperation with the parties concerned and help the country achieve lasting peace and stability.

China is ready to play its part, together with the rest of the international community, in helping the country truly achieve lasting peace, stability and development.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Poland.

At the outset, let me thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing and state Poland's strong support for his Office, which we see as the guarantor of stability of the post-Dayton achievements. We take note of his report (S/2018/416, annex), which was presented today before the Security Council, and share many concerns expressed therein.

Since the very beginning, Poland has been actively engaged in bringing about peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1991, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the first non-communist Polish Prime Minister, was appointed Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. His reports on human

rights violations in the former Yugoslavia, containing, inter alia, references to the Srebrenica massacre, played a key role in the decision-making process regarding the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today we remain vitally interested in the integrity and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a volatile world, nothing can be taken for granted, and today's achievements can easily dissipate if insufficient attention is given to creating conditions for a sustainable future.

In that context, let me convey Poland's belief that staying on the path to European and Euro-Atlantic integration remains the best hope for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to enjoy quality of life in a stable framework of shared values. Those values, however, need to be put in practice in a consistent manner, which requires effort and commitment, as well as a sense of responsibility, on the part of governing elites. In that regard, we must note with concern worrisome trends that are undermining the achievements of the past 25 years. Divisive and destructive rhetoric is still being heard from leading political figures, and the authority of the legal framework and judicial institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be openly flouted in one part of the country in stark contravention of international agreements.

Inclusivity, equality and participatory democracy are at the core of European values. The rule of law and its entrenchment are part of the conditions set out in the European Union Western Balkans strategy. Nevertheless, the decisions of both the European Court of Human Rights and the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the electoral law remain unenforced after many years, while recent developments regarding the Criminal Procedure Code threaten to cripple the State in combating organized crime and corruption. Inclusivity and equal opportunity for all take on particular importance with regard to young people and women. Their participation in public life and a sense of common destiny are essential for the integrity of the social fabric. Access to quality education and equal opportunities in the labour market and public life are the most reliable foundations for building future prosperity.

Let me conclude by stating once again Poland's interest in the European and Euro-Atlantic future for Bosnia and Herzegovina and our commitment to assist with our experience.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Vukašinović (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Madam, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May and wish you and your delegation every success. We welcome Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, and have taken note of his fifty-third report (S/2018/416, annex) on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, covering the period from 22 October 2017 to 21 April 2018.

Bosnia and Herzegovina further intensified its efforts during the reporting period in the implementation of the reform agenda and continued dynamic work in implementing the socioeconomic reforms necessary for integration into the European Union (EU). As a result of continued and synchronized efforts at all levels to finalize the answers to a comprehensive questionnaire of the European Commission, the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina provided the answers to more than 3,000 questions, relating to the compatibility of the country's economic, legal and social systems with EU standards, to the European Commission's President, Jean-Claude Juncker, on 28 February, thereby reflecting its readiness to join the European Union. We look forward to receiving the opinion of the European Commission based on the answers to the questionnaire, which we hope will be forthcoming soon. Pending the results of the Commission's analysis of Bosnia and Herzegovina's readiness for accession to the EU, we will continue the implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement.

We thank the European Union and its States members for their strong support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's European path. For its part, Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to work towards improvement in all areas, including reforms, strengthening the rule of law and good governance, thereby emphasizing the unwavering commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership in the European Union.

One of the main priorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina's foreign policy is the advancement of friendly and constructive cooperation among the countries of the region on issues of mutual interest. That is why Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to pay

special attention to strengthening cooperation with countries in the region. The countries of the Western Balkans continue to hold regular meetings at the highest levels that are generating a positive political atmosphere. A recent significant meeting took place on the 6 March, when members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina hosted a successful trilateral meeting with President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović of Croatia and President Aleksandar Vučić of Serbia.

We recognize the Government of Bulgaria, which holds the presidency of the Council of European Union for the period from January to June of this year, for organizing the summit of the EU and Western Balkans leaders to be held in Sofia next week. That will be the first summit of the EU and Western Balkans leaders since the one held in Thessaloniki in 2003. Bosnia and Herzegovina will actively participate in the summit in Sofia. The Western Balkans Cooperation, within the framework of the Berlin process, remains a crucial driver for the integration of the region into the European Union, as well as for cooperation and stability within the region of the Western Balkans. We look forward to actively participating in the upcoming summit, which is expected to be held in London in July.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has intensified its efforts in strengthening the rule of law in the following key areas. During the reporting period, Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to fulfil its international obligations with regard to countering terrorism and violent extremism. The framework action plan and the strategy for prevention and combating terrorism for the period from 2015 to 2020 is being implemented. The judicial institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to prosecute individuals involved in fighting on behalf of terrorist organizations, as well as those facilitating the recruitment of terrorist fighters. It is important to emphasize that the strategy, together with security measures, includes preventive activities for deradicalization undertaken by national stakeholders, such as religious communities, educational institutions, civil society organizations and the media.

Moreover, during the reporting period, Bosnia and Herzegovina's rule of law and security institutions made progress in combating organized crime, human trafficking, drugs, corruption and money laundering. The action plan to address Bosnia and Herzegovina's deficiencies in anti-money-laundering regulations has been implemented, and, in February, Bosnia and Herzegovina was removed from the Financial Action Task Force's list of high-risk third countries with structural deficiencies in anti-money-laundering and counter-terrorist financing.

With regard to processing war crimes before domestic courts, we would like to reiterate that fighting impunity is vital for Bosnia and Herzegovina as a complex and multinational State. In that context, implementing the national strategy for processing war crimes, regardless of the national or religious origin of perpetrators and victims, is essential for reconciliation and long-term stability.

With regard to the economic situation, it is always important to stress that Bosnia and Herzegovina's economy, like others in the region, has been affected by global economic fluctuations. However, we are making progress in establishing a functioning market economy and furthering our economic growth. Economic growth has been at 2.5 per cent on average annually over the past five years. The number of registered unemployed persons in 2017 dropped by 6.9 per cent, as compared to a decline of 3.9 per cent in 2016. Nevertheless, the youth unemployment rate is still over 50 per cent. Job creation for youth and the creation of a legal framework to improve the business environment will remain priorities in the economic reform programme in the upcoming period.

The international migrant crisis continues to pose a substantial challenge to the States of the region and their economies. During the second half of 2017, Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced a significant increase in refugees and migrants, most of whom crossed the border in an irregular manner. Arrivals have continued this year, which temporarily exceeded Bosnia and Herzegovina's accommodation capacity in January.

In that context, Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities have undertaken a set of comprehensive measures, including in the humanitarian and security areas. Bosnia and Herzegovina is implementing its strategy in the area of migration and asylum, along with its plan of action for the period of 2016-2020. The document has specified the Bosnia and Herzegovina policy in the area of migration and asylum in accordance with the highest European and international standards. Bosnia and Herzegovina has in place a migration coordination body led by the Ministry of Security, which has been closely reviewing the evolving context of the refugee and migrant situation in the country

and planning further action in coordination with the Council of Ministers.

The European Union-led Operation Althea has been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina for many years. It is important to emphasize that Bosnia and Herzegovina has had respectable and fruitful cooperation with Operation Althea, particularly in the capacity-building and training of the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We wish the new Commander of the European Union Force, Major General Martin Dorfer, every success in further strengthening cooperation with the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to contribute to international peace and security by providing its military and police personnel to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Presently, we have 42 personnel serving in United Nations peacekeeping missions worldwide.

Finally, we would like to express the readiness of Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities to continue their work in securing a better and prosperous future for its citizens. At the same time, we would also like to express gratitude to our international partners for supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina on that path.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Adamson: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Liechtenstein align themselves with this statement.

I join other speakers in welcoming High Representative Valentin Inzko back to the Security Council and in assuring him of the European Union's continued support. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina and thank him for his statement.

I recall my delegation stating a year ago (see S/PV.8089) that 2016 had been a very good year for Bosnia and Herzegovina, both in terms of reforms and progress towards European integration. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for 2017. Early electoral campaigning, divisive rhetoric and delayed, if not stalled, reforms have too often occupied the main headlines. But 2018 does not have to continue that cycle. Recent developments — ranging from the submission of the replies to the EU Commission questionnaire, the adoption of excise legislation or the removal of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the list of countries under the Grey List of the Financial Action Task Force — show that results can be obtained if Government coalition partners focus on improving the lives of citizens and delivering reforms.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has made clear its desire to become a member of the European Union. That strategic commitment from the country's institutions and leaders should be followed up by concrete reforms, for which there is substantial EU support. Strengthening the rule of law and fighting corruption and organized crime are key for advancing the socioeconomic situation in the country and EU rapprochement.

We are now approaching the end of the current legislature. The implementation of the reform agenda has delivered mixed results. Elections have been officially announced today to be held on 7 October. Official election campaigning will start. The real question for the election campaign is what new proposals on putting into action the reform agenda the new Government will put forward after the October elections. That is an opportunity political leaders should seize to show both their citizens and EU member States their concrete proposals to take forward reforms and improve the lives of citizens.

Bosnia and Herzegovina today still has a gross domestic product per capita lower than in the 1980s. The percentage of Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens born in the country and living abroad is the highest in Europe, including the Western Balkans. Emigration of talented young people continues unabated. That brain drain puts a mortgage on the country's future.

(*spoke in French*)

It has often been said that to govern is to write prose, and to conduct an election campaign is to declaim poetry. What the election campaign needs, however, is prose that looks to the future and puts forward a political agenda for concrete progress. The glorification of war criminals found guilty by an international court, playing the secessionist card or glossing over rearmament, all such rhetoric from the past simply has no place in the electoral campaign of a European country aspiring to join the European Union. Despite a relatively calm security situation, in that politically charged context, the European Union maintains its firm support for the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea and the mandate given to it by the Council.

(*spoke in English*)

The conduct of elections also entails the proper implementation of its results. Unless political leaders break the current impasse on electoral reform, there is a real risk that the elections will fail to produce a Government, and a Government is essential to take forward reforms. There is nothing inevitable about a political crisis after the elections. Politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina have the responsibility to prevent one. To date, we have witnessed from all sides little willingness for cross-party compromise. To ensure the proper implementation of recent rulings by the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina must find a compromise without further delay.

While acknowledging that the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina lists Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs as constituent peoples, along with others, the European Union reiterates that the principles of equality of all citizens and non-discrimination shall be fully warranted. The most pressing issue is to find a solution that will enable the formation of the Federation House of Peoples and political institutions linked to it as required by 2016 and 2017 Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court decisions. The issue of local elections in Mostar requires full attention as well.

The European Union considers that electoral reforms should be approached in a spirit of consensus and dialogue as an important matter, thereby also calling on Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights recommendations in order to move the country towards European standards, improving democratic processes for future elections.

The EU, together with our international partners, including the United States, has worked extensively through facilitation efforts to resolve the current electoral impasse, and we will continue to do so. The onus, however, remains on the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take ownership for political reforms. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to show the international community, and the EU member States in particular, that it can organize its political life effectively and in a spirit of compromise — a prerequisite for any country aspiring to become a member of the EU.

The election of the members of the Presidency will be addressed after the October elections. While electoral campaigning will play a major part in the political scene of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the coming months, we urge other actors, chiefly the rule-of-law institutions, to continue taking forward reforms, and for judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officials to continue adjudicating, prosecuting and investigating with full determination. In that context, we expect appropriate amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina to be adopted as a matter of priority. The amendments should be in line with international standards and should not undermine the ability of institutions to tackle serious organized crime, corruption and other rule of law challenges. In addition, the European Union calls on the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina to step up efforts regarding the functioning and the independence of the judiciary, strengthening migration and border management, fighting corruption and organized crime, as well as countering terrorism and violent extremism and preventing radicalization.

The adoption, in February, of the strategy for the Western Balkans demonstrates our renewed commitment to the Western Balkans. On 17 May, the European Union's leaders will hold a summit in Sofia together with all our Western Balkans partners. Fifteen years after the Thessaloniki Summit, the door to the European Union remains open. It is for Bosnia and Herzegovina to seize the opportunity offered and to fulfil the conditions to reach its European goal.

Finally, Bosnia and Herzegovina's resolve to move forward towards European integration needs to translate into an election campaign that allows for honest reflection on the challenges ahead and the reforms required to address them. That means an election campaign that does not dwell on what happened a quarter of a century ago, but that puts forward concrete proposals for its citizens to decide where the country sees its own future.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): Croatia welcomes this discussion. Following the statement by the observer of the European Union (EU), I shall make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

Let me start by welcoming the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, and by

thanking him for his report (S/2017/922, annex) and briefing today.

The period ahead of us will be of key importance for Bosnia and Herzegovina. With that in mind, we need to emphasize once again that a stable, peaceful and united Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on the genuine institutional equality of its three constituent peoples and all citizens, is a generator of stability for South-Eastern Europe and beyond. Against that background, the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement was, and still is, the anchor of stability and peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Dayton Peace Agreement codified the fundamental principle upon which Bosnia and Herzegovina stands: there are three constituent peoples who are equal owners of sovereignty and political legitimacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks should be equal in every respect, including exercising the same responsibility in safeguarding the functionality and stability of this multi-ethnic and multi-religious country The Dayton Peace Agreement provides a pivotal institutional and constitutional framework for that.

Croatia was among the first States to recognize the independence and the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the hardest of times during the aggression of the Slobodan Milošević regime and the Yugoslav People's Army in the first half of the 1990s. Croatia played a crucial role in the birth and survival of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent State. That is an established historical fact. We must look towards the future, but history should not be forgotten: during the war in the 1990s Croatia sheltered hundreds of thousands of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and provided humanitarian assistance in many ways, from logistics and equipment, to medical care. Upon the request from the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in accordance with our bilateral agreements, Croatia provided decisive military assistance, thereby preventing the fall of the city of Bihać and a repetition of the Srebrenica genocide. In a word, Croatia played a pivotal role in ending the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and enabling the Dayton Peace Agreement.

As a signatory of the Dayton Peace Agreement, Croatia bears special responsibility for the well-being of Bosnia and Herzegovina and remains unequivocally committed to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country, as well as to the equality of its three constituent peoples with full respect towards the rights of the others. Bosnia and Herzegovina's integration in the European Union and NATO remains our strategic goal.

Today Croatia provides Bosnia and Herzegovina with strong assistance in education, health care and basic services. Our trade exchange amounts to almost €2 billion per year, making Croatia the first trade partner of Bosnia and Herzegovina in terms of imports into the country, and the second regarding exports from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Croatia is also the leading foreign investor, with over €1 billion in investments in the real sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That all points towards one conclusion: for Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina is much more than a neighbour. Bosnia and Herzegovina is our partner, and we wholeheartedly support it in building a better future for all its citizens.

As an EU and NATO member State, Croatia will continue supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina in its EU membership ambition, while extending our full political support and technical expertise and assistance. Advancement in that process is of the utmost importance — not only because it is the best investment in the country's future, but because it is also a way to help to overcome difficult burdens of the past.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's road towards the European Union is of the highest order, but it is burdened with many hurdles. In that regard, Croatia would like to echo the European Parliament's resolutions on the progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2015 and 2016, which point out that Bosnia and Herzegovina will not be a successful candidate for EU membership until appropriate institutional conditions have been established based on the principles of federalism, decentralization and legitimate and proportionate representation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is fast approaching general elections in October 2018. This period is crucial for delivering results of inter-party dialogue for electoral reform. The urgent adoption of that reform, following the rulings by the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Ljubić case and in the case of the city of Mostar, is not just necessary but of paramount importance for the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the post-election implementation of electoral results. That reform should ensure proportionate and legitimate representation of the constituent peoples at all levels of Government, enforcing in particular

specific electoral provisions on the Federation House of Peoples, as well as the election of members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, an overarching electoral reform is needed in order to keep the pillars of the peoples' equality alive and preserve the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As mentioned in the EU statement, the election of the members of the Presidency will be addressed after the October elections. Let me add to that: it could and should be addressed even sooner — as soon as possible — with all due urgency. That will depend primarily on the genuine readiness of all parties concerned, and Croatia strongly supports efforts in that regard.

What Bosnia and Herzegovina needs today is not the inflammatory rhetoric of certain political groups, but the wisdom to embrace the fundamental principles and political features of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are deeply rooted in the country's complex history and essential for its prosperous future. The country's Central Election Commission has called for the October general elections. The holding of elections and the implementation of their results, including proper functioning of the institutions, is an essential democratic requirement for any country. Therefore, the political leaders should be aware of the responsibility they carry for the future of their homeland. People today, especially the young, are voting with their feet. Political apathy will only add to the sense of despondency caused by the socioeconomic situation, as the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina is still falling short of the expectations of its citizens. Bosnia and Herzegovina deserves a better future.

In conclusion, we sincerely hope that Bosnia and Herzegovina will find the strength and the prudence to overcome the present political impasse and proceed more efficiently on the path of EU and NATO integration. For that, a comprehensive electoral process in October is indispensable. Croatia will continue to advocate a sharp and permanent focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina at the European and international levels. Bosnia and Herzegovina deserves our constant attention and assistance in order to unleash its full and untapped potential.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Milanović (Serbia): Regional stability and the development of overall cooperation in the Western Balkans have been long-standing foreign-policy priorities of Serbia. The pursuit of those goals has long been reflected in the activities of my country, as we believe that that is the best way to bring about a politically stable and economically dynamic region. The joint projects we undertake are therefore of paramount importance in our endeavours to provide realistic prospects for a better future for Serbia and its neighbours. We are convinced that Serbia's goodwill is acknowledged and recognized, and have therefore always been ready and willing to invest additional efforts to achieve more in that regard. To achieve those goals, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a crucial and reliable partner in our joint march along the same road.

Serbia's ties with Bosnia and Herzegovina are deep-rooted and manifold. In 1995, the milestone Dayton Peace Agreement was signed, ending a protracted and bitter war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serbia is a guarantor of the Agreement and continues to believe that it is very important. It provides a basis for peace and stability and is key to the promotion of the all-important goal of genuine reconciliation and mutual trust and confidence. However, we are still called upon to continue to invest our best efforts in its achievement, notwithstanding occasional discordant tones heard in the region that remind us of events of the tragic past. Detrimental to the efforts that we have all elected to promote, they often burden the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, create unnecessary problems among the country's entities and constituent peoples and affect the situation in the entire region.

Serbia has been a staunch and consistent supporter of the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Western Balkans' recent past is indicative of their importance to peace and stability and the creation of sustainable confidence. Respect for such principles is a sine qua non in relations with neighbours. Based on the provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement, Serbia has been firmly and genuinely committed to Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Serbia believes that potential differences in the positions of the entities on important issues, both with regard to jurisdiction and election law, as well as other issues, belong in the realm of internal questions for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and supports genuine and open dialogue, which it believes is conducive to implementable solutions acceptable to all. All sides are called upon to work towards building mutual confidence and respect.

Serbia supports an unimpeded election cycle in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Transparency, good faith and responsibility will help much in that regard. They will also help the country's joint institutions function more effectively and make a greater contribution to its reform processes. One-sided acts, exchanges of heated, negative messages and the recycling of old divisions and problems and the creation of new ones are contrary to the true interests of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Serbia is convinced that political dialogue at all levels with Bosnia and Herzegovina is of particular importance for the development of all-round relations. Officials of the two countries took part in many meetings — bilateral and multilateral — in the preceding period. One very important meeting was the trilateral meeting among the members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Presidents of Croatia and Serbia in Mostar on 6 March.

Economic cooperation between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and continued efforts by the two countries to constantly develop it have had a positive impact on overall bilateral relations. Over the past 10 years, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have doubled their trade exchange. We are also well aware of the importance of strengthening regional efforts in order to bring people together and link economies. Such efforts will continue to be bolstered in no small measure by regular discussions of concrete projects in the areas of infrastructure, energy, tourism, free trade and, in particular, the modernization of roads and rail road corridors.

We are joined in our common endeavours with Bosnia and Herzegovina and by our common aspirations to join the European Union (EU). The European Union may face multiple challenges and be in the process of consolidation, but we are emboldened by the fact that our efforts are appreciated and accorded the attention that we in the region expect. The fact that the European Union's policy of enlargement to the Western Balkans is a continuous and stable process that provides for the admission of new members, perhaps even before 2025, is also evinced by documents it adopted recently. Their message is constructive and encouraging and grist to the mill of the region's reforms and development of mutual cooperation. The processes of reform and cooperation are of great importance for my country, widely seen as a viable candidate for EU membership in 2025, for Bosnia and Herzegovina and for some of Serbia's other neighbouring countries. While carrying out its own reform processes, Serbia looks forward to each and every success Bosnia and Herzegovina achieves and is willing to share its own experiences and help Bosnia and Herzegovina in its progress towards European integration.

The people of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are very close. After all, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in particular Republika Srpska, is home to a large number of Serbs. For the sake of a better future, Serbia is ready to cooperate extensively with Bosnia and Herzegovina and its entities. Through common will and joint efforts, we can make our relations catalytic to the processes of regional rapprochement and good-neighbourliness. Developing the region, employing its considerable economic potential, linking its infrastructure and ensuring better communications and movement will help us meet the justified expectations of our citizens. We should address unanswered questions about the past. However, we must do so in stride and not allow them to affect our present interests and achievements.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.